

**By Congressman David Price -**

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the fiscal year (FY) 2012 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill.

I do want to start on a positive note. The bill would restore the President's proposed cuts to mitigation fish hatcheries; that's a good thing. It would increase funding for the Indian Health Service, and it would largely maintain funding for National Park Service operations and the Smithsonian. So I commend the subcommittee for those decisions. But I'm afraid the list of positive things is pretty short.

This bill before us picks up where H.R. 1 left off last spring, making numerous and deep cuts to the programs that protect our air, water, public lands and wildlife. Let me take a moment to highlight a couple of the most egregious cuts in the bill:

**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** – The LWCF funds the acquisition of public lands so that they are protected from development and can be enjoyed by future generations. LWCF has a dedicated revenue stream from offshore drilling royalties and takes nothing from the general fund. And yet, this bill would cut LWCF funding by 80 percent -- the lowest level of funding for the program in 45 years. It threatens completion of the acquisition of the Rocky Fork tract in East Tennessee and several threatened treasures in North Carolina that need protection. Every Member of Congress should ask: "How many acquisition projects would this halt in my state?" There is no reassuring answer.

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** – This bill continues the Republican Majority's assault on the EPA. After imposing a 16% cut in the current fiscal year, the majority is now proposing a further 18% reduction in the agency's budget. That would push agency staffing to 1991 levels. The goal of a cut so massive is plain and simple: to ensure that EPA doesn't have the resources it needs to fulfill its core mission. That mission includes life-saving and life-enhancing research, which is largely based in my district at the Research Triangle Park.

**Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRFs)** – The SRFs provide funding

directly to the states to fund water infrastructure projects that enable communities to better manage wastewater and polluted runoff and to protect clean and safe drinking water. This provides one of the most basic services taxpayers expect: clean water. And yet, this bill would cut funding for these two programs by nearly \$1 billion, combined. Given how essential water supply is to economic growth, it is particularly ironic to make these cuts when our communities are struggling to retain and regain jobs. I suggest to colleagues, ask your state and local governments how they are going to make up this difference.

As if these cuts weren't bad enough, the majority has loaded this bill with legislative policy riders and funding limitations that will roll back 40 years of progress towards clean air and clean water. These anti-environment riders have no place in an appropriations bill. They will not save the country a penny and will cost tens of thousands of lives, expose our children, families, and communities to unnecessary illness, and degrade our irreplaceable natural resources.

The majority claims that these cuts are needed to demonstrate fiscal discipline, but this is a text book case of false economies. In gutting critical environmental protection programs, it piles up frightful economic and human costs for the future. Our constituents and our environment – today, and in future generations – deserve better than what this bill is offering. I urge my colleagues to oppose this short-sighted appropriations bill.

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